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**Testimony in Support of SB 925, An Act Establishing a
Home Visitation Program Consortium**

February 27, 2015

Honorable Committee Members:

My name is Cheryl Burack and I am the Executive Director of Family Centered Services of CT, a community-based organization with a mission to work with families to ensure that they are safe and nurturing places where children can succeed. I would like to support SB 925, An Act Establishing a Home Visitation Program Consortium, and share my hopes that this Consortium represent and give equal voice to a broad base of the home visiting field, including parents, Home Visitors and their Supervisors, researchers and policy developers.

The purpose and role of the proposed Home Visitation Consortium is to oversee the implementation of the recommendations for the coordination of home visitation programs within the early childhood system and to ensure the continued collaboration of home visitation programs within the state in order to improve the services offered to vulnerable families with young children. With this ambitious charge, it is important that the Consortium be a representative group of family members, providers, researchers and policy developers.

In its CT Home Visiting Plan for Families with Young Children, the CT Office of Early Childhood offers as example the development of the Continuous Quality Improvement Team developed by the CT Children's Trust Fund. The Team was composed of representatives from member agencies including front-line direct service and supervisory staff, along with researchers and leaders from the Trust Fund. Program staff at all levels had much to contribute to the development of the model, policies, and practice. Membership revolved every two years, and each program and each member had the opportunity to participate, offer input and vote on important policy decisions.

Far from a 'top-down' approach, it ensured that the needs of all were accurately understood, responsibility was shared and all members were invested in a productive and positive outcome. It is my sincere hope that the Office of Early Childhood will take a similarly inclusive approach in establishing the Home Visitation Consortium, combining family members, grass-roots program representatives including direct service and middle management representatives of Home Visitation programs, along with policy developers to most closely reflect the needs and goals of the families being served.

A representative Consortium will also better ensure that the home visitation system is flexible enough to provide for a comprehensive continuum of services based on community need, that barriers to access are resolved and that providers collaborate to best meet the needs of children and families.